

CAREER FOCUS

How NOT to mentor

BY MASTER SGT.
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TEAM KIRTLAND career assistance advisor

A key step in retaining Airmen in the Air Force is letting them know what's going on. In fact, passing on information to younger members is key to what mentorship is all about. This information exchange is likely why effective mentorship seems to be having a positive effect on retention, and may be one reason the Air Force is projecting it will exceed its retention goals this year.

Mentorship is also a buzzword. Buzzwords are trendy, and when something is trendy, everyone jumps on the bandwagon with their idea of how to do it and what it is. It's not very hard to find information about mentorship. In fact, I found a file on the World Wide Web the other day that installs a mentorship "help file" on your computer with just a click. How handy. I didn't install it on my government computer, of course – *that* would be illegal – but you can see that with just a little effort you can find many opinions on what being a mentor is. Well, with the "how-to" approach having been done to death, I decided to approach the subject from another angle. As a career assistance advisor, I know that mentorship is an effective and powerful retention tool, and as such it is everyone's responsibility to assume a role in the process. When you're dealing with tools, however, it is as important to know what NOT to do, as it is to know "how-to."

Mentorship is not building a little "you." The "mini-me" syndrome is hard to

avoid. We all like to give a leg up to people that remind us of ourselves. That's fine, as long as you're also willing to get outside your comfort zone and help someone who doesn't bring your younger self to mind. During a visit to Kirtland AFB, earlier this year Gen. Gregory S. Martin, Air Force Material Command commander, said, "supervisors need to mentor people who are not like themselves. This broadens not only the younger person's knowledge and experience, but also the knowledge and experience of the mentor." Not only should we seek opportunities to mentor Airmen of other races, genders, or social background, we should be open to and actively seek out that kind of mentorship ourselves.

Mentorship is not painting a perfect picture of yourself. Everyone makes mistakes and pretending you never have does nothing to build the confidence of the person you're helping. In fact, you build barriers that way. A genuine rapport comes from identification, and if you paint a picture of yourself at some unattainable level, a young Airman might feel they will never live up to your example. If you've made a mistake, admit it, then make sure you let your Airman know what you did to correct it. And if you don't know an answer, say so, and then ask someone else for the right answer. Sometimes people learn as much from your mistakes as you do.

Mentoring is not telling stories of the "good old days." It's not unusual to walk into a shop or section and hear stories about what things used to be like in



Master Sgt. David Halvorson

the Air Force. Fact is, things were never as great as we remember them to be, and we aren't nearly as bad off now as we like to think. The only effect *this* kind of sharing has is in breeding discontent in our young and impressionable Airmen. If we (as the experts) tell someone that they are getting a raw deal, they are likely going to believe us. After all, why would we lie? Airmen have to live in *today's* Air Force. The junior Airmen and officers we influence now will carry our legacy into the future. Do we want them to remember our generation as the one that griped about the demise of the old air corps, *or* the ones who built the finest air and space force in the world? Always try to be positive when you mentor; it's contagious, and it will likely infect you with a renewed sense of optimism as a result. In the end, mentorship is a valuable tool, and an important one in our retention toolbox. And as professionals, we ought to know how to use the tools issued to us, and more importantly, how *not* to.



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COMMAND CHIEF's CHOICE

Staff Sgt. Jerry Scott...



... is the Education and Training Manager for the 58th Operations Group assigned to the 58th Operations Support Squadron. His responsibilities include managing the training programs of five units that comprise the 58th OG. This entails managing personnel enrolled in Career Development Courses, upgrade training, scheduling for 7-level school and any specialized training needed by unit personnel for advancement in their career field.

What do you like best about this assignment? The opportunity of working with younger troops and assisting them in allowing the Air Force to be a great part of their lives.

What is the most memorable event in your Air Force career? Being selected for technical sergeant this year!

What will you take away from this assignment? An appreciation of the natural beauty of the southwest. New Mexico is a beautiful state with a rich culture and people who love family and friends.

What are your hobbies? Sporting activities such as racquetball, basketball and reading insightful books.

What person do you consider a great influence in your life? My wife.

Where do you see yourself in 10 years? Retired from the Air Force and pastoring a church.

What aspect of your life do you consider most important? The opportunity to make a positive, lasting influence on someone and helping them to make right decisions that will go beyond this lifetime.

What is your main goal in life? To maximize my gifts and talents for God's purpose.



Photo by Dennis Carlson

Pararescue/Combat Rescue Officer School Class 2004-03, left to right, Capt. Stephen R. Savell, Staff Sgt. Dana Vaughan, Senior Airman Robert McGee, Capt. John Graver, Tech. Sgt. Lemuel Torres, Senior Airman Brian D. Zmijewski, Capt. Thomas S. Butler, Capt. Jose L. Cabrera, Airman 1st Class David Welker, Airman 1st Class Joshua C. Trombley, Airman 1st Class John W. Brown, Airman 1st Class Kristofer J. Darrow, Senior Airman Bryan S. Lembo, Senior Airman Christopher W. Percecchi, Staff Sgt. Ivan Eggel, Master Sgt. Robert J. Casey, Senior Airman Lopaka K. Mounts, Airman 1st Class Kenneth R. Ortega, graduated Sept. 2 in a ceremony at the Mountain View Club.

POWs, MIAs remembered with ceremony, 24-hour run

BY JENNIFER E. WEST

Nucleus staff writer

TEAM KIRTLAND participates in the Sept. 17 ceremony honoring American Prisoners of War and Missing in Action members of the military. A ceremony in remembrance is 3 p.m., Sept. 17, at the New Mexico Veterans Memorial Park, 1100 Louisiana Boulevard Southeast.

The 2004 remembrance ceremony includes instrumental music by the 44th Army Band, performance by the Defense Threat Reduction Agency Multi-Service Color guard and musical selections by Senior Airman Keith Loudermill, a static display of an H-60 helicopter and a helicopter flyover provided by the 58th Special Operations Wing. American Legion Post 49 provides a 21-gun salute.

Shuttle buses are provided to and from the ceremony. The schedule is:

Arrival at Consolidated Support Building, 2:20 p.m. and departure at 2:25 p.m.; arrival at 377th Air Base Wing Headquarters, 2:30 p.m.; arrival at Kirtland NCO Academy, 2:35 p.m., departure 2:40 p.m.

Loading at the New Mexico Veterans Memorial Park, 4 p.m., departure to Kirtland AFB 4:10 p.m. to drop off at above pickup points.

A flag carried by teams of runners in a 24-hour vigil arriving at the ceremony, concludes the vigil. Runners or walkers will participate in the vigil Sept. 16-17. For information, send an e-mail to POWMIA@afotec.af.mil and indicate your desired time to run or walk or other volunteer tasks as part of the vigil. Or, contact Capt. Shay B. Lingerfelt at 846-9761.